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A Criticism of Certain Current Conceptions
of the Idea of God

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I.

The Theology of Crisis

Introduction

Before we attempt to criticize certain modern conceptions of the idea of God we must first gain for ourselves an insight into the change of emphasis that has been attained in theological discussion. It is also well for us to consider the forces which have made necessary this shift of theological emphasis.

It is possible to find an entirely new interpretation of theology in our day; with a recentralization of the greatest themes of interest in its realm. The change from yesterday to today has affected not only aspects of social and economic life but also our religious interpretations. The fundamental, or essential beliefs, underlying religious interpretation today differ from those of a few decades ago to a great extent. Whereas theology in the past has been interested in doctrines, dogmas, and creeds regarding merely theoretical interests; today its concern has been concentrated around one vital all dominating theme; that of the idea of God. Centralized interest in this basic concept of theology has, of course, consigned to a secondary place all theological contentions of lesser importance. These seem rightly to be fast approaching the circumference of interest. Not only

has this interest lessened, as important, many secondary theological ideas, but, it has also tended to change the structure of these lesser theological concepts so that they would scarcely be recognized by theologians of by-gone days.

Such a revolution in the concepts of theology has not merely affected the "queen of sciences" itself, but, has as well had an effect in the economic and social realms. Indeed, it would not be far from the truth to state that the social and economic fields have in a large degree caused these changes in theology. The present state of economic and social turmoil has made it absolutely necessary for theology to turn to the very soul of its life - the idea of God - or suffer the consequence of losing its influence in society. Discontent and dissatisfaction in both realms have demanded assistance from a source outside of themselves. Crime, war, delinquency, together with poverty, individual and national bankruptcy have all done much to make men cry out for aid from a power beyond themselves. Theology can no longer give men the stones of creed, dogma, and doctrine. Society demands the very heart of theology; a God who will love, understand, and aid it in the necessary readjustment which society must make because of the very crucial nature of its problems. Even to the coolly rational individual, the

situation must appear to be one of "crisis", or at least, a situation that needs readjustment.

Because of the very potency of outside needs, we find theology, then, to be turning necessarily to its central theme. Its reaction to this can clearly be seen by the revived interest in the character and identity of God. Many books now appear in an endeavor to aid theology in this necessary task. Most of them center their argument around the very nature of God, whether he be "above" his world, altogether "in" his world, or both above and in it.

It is my desire to discuss three schools of theology which interpret the idea of God; namely, the new Transcendentalism (the theology of crisis), Humanism, and Personalism. In each school I wish to discuss the following subjects; the probability of a permanent entity, the nature of God, the nature of God's relation to man, and the aid of such a concept of God to man in his readjustment to society.

The Theology of Crisis

This type of theological interpretation came to birth out of a very real conscious feeling of a state of crisis. Disillusionment as to the possibility of the idealistic in human society and civilization as such came as the direct shock of the world war and its after effects upon the continent. Utter disparagement as to the possibilities of human nature to reach any degree of idealism, spirituality, and even honorable, righteous, ethical living in itself has led this school of thought into a drastic reaction against the present trend of current theological systems. This is due to the social and moral state of society in Europe following the horrible disintegration of ideals and moral achievements in the development of a Christian type of civilization.

We may also find a reason for this reaction in the theological heritage of Europe, particularly Germany. With a strong theological background of Lutherism and Swiss Calvinism it was easy for these modern theologians to turn to the faith of their fathers. In America and England with a somewhat different theological heritage and a lesser degree of depression (especially in America) such a reaction would

have less chance to gain adherents and popularity. One, however, can feel an energetic, challenging tone behind the entire Barthian movement which speaks with authority and finality to a people who have been shaken in their conceptions of truth, belief, and faith. This is, no doubt, the power in the movement which gives it the popularity it now enjoys in European Protestantism.

The Probability of a Permanent Entity

With a search for some permanent entity, some power upon which to rest a much shaken civilization, Barthianism has sought for inspiration in a revelation, of truth and security amidst chaos. Civilization, humanity, as well as individual personalities have been rejected as an ultimate source of a much needed stability. Civilization with its wars, humanity with its social and economic injustices and the individual with his limitations, weaknesses and sins of many types, have been looked upon skeptically as to their capacity to meet the needs of the human heart and to make the necessary social adjustments which would introduce an ideal state of affairs, or the kingdom of God.

The leading exponents of this school, Barth and Brunner,

find themselves content with their system of theology only when they place in it a certain permanent power. Because of the religious heritage of the movement, and also the psychological trend of the Germanic mind; a dominant force, a power, and a stability must be found, accepted and relied upon. A total chaos of social relationships looms into view if one is an unbeliever and a skeptic upon the subject of a permanent entity. The crisis of humanity is unavoidable if the individual as well as society does not find this stabilizing force - or - God.

Total distrust of the ability of humanity leads the Barthians away from the acceptance of any doctrine of humanism. To them humanity and the trust of man in himself has failed and failed utterly. The picture of this failure is indeed dark and the Barthians would draw away from it in an attitude of disgust for any reliance upon human ability. Any ability of man to work out his own salvation is impossible because of the fact that man is absolutely unable to do anything good, to do any righteous act, or to reach any spiritual heights in himself. Such an agnosticism of humanity has led some theologians at the outset, to a conservative, fundamental orthodoxy from which they have been unable to free themselves. The temptation to steep themselves more

and more in this aspect of interpretation has been so indulged in that it colors their entire theology and shapes their attitudes on all aspects of the doctrine of God and his relation to man.

The Nature of God

With the rejection of the possibilities of humanism in the presentation of a saving power or staple entity, Barthianism turns to God, Himself. Because of human frailty and dissatisfaction with the power of humanity to solve the world problems, this school doubts any validity of interpretation which would give deity a degree of immanence. God must be above any human experience of any description or kind. Man cannot work towards God, God alone can reveal himself to man. He does not do this through an immanent nature, but through his commanding Kingship, or the Absoluteness of his nature.

"The mysterious God, whom the world neither knows or shows, whom I do not know and whom the inner man does not reveal, must reveal his mystery to the world, must tell his own name, by piercing into the world." (1) This evidently can be done only by the imposition of his nature

(1) Brunner, H. Emil: The Theology of Crisis, Page 31.

upon individual men. Therefore, individual men receive his "grace" not because of their own will or endeavor, but because they are chosen or "elected" by God. Such reasoning indicates a return to Calvin. Such ideas are difficult for the writer of this paper to appreciate. "God is the Other, the One, the Unknowable One, who asserts himself over against the world as a being who is not-world, not-ego, who reveals his true name, the secret of his unknown will which is opposed to the world, contrary to our experience and above all to the thoughts and intents of our own heart." (1)

To be sure, such a God is permanent enough, he is not only the Absolute and the Unknown mover of the universe, but he is the mystical Sovereign of mankind, who rules with a will unknown and unappreciated by man in so far as man is concerned. Such a distant God appears to be uninterested in the welfare of mankind as a whole, but only concerned about a few individuals whom he can "pluck from the burning" by his dominant will, a choice quite contrary to the will and desire of the individual in question.

Such a dogmatic concept of the nature of God seems to divert attention from the very central theme of Christian

(1) Brunner, H. Emil: The Theology of Crisis, Page 31.

or religious endeavor, the readjustment of society to avert crises, and chaos, and to fit it for the kingdom of God. Such a God would not be just, fair, or logical to his own nature as revealed through the founder of Christianity. He would be a despot who is absolutely unfair and unethical in his reaction to mankind and the individual problems of men. However, Barthianism seems not to be interested in mankind, nor in the betterment of society, nor even in the establishment of the kingdom of God. In this aspect, at least, Barthianism seems to escape its contribution to the problems of the races of civilization. In its conception of the nature of God, it adopts an attitude like unto that of an ostrich which hides its head in the ground, in order to let every passing force go by unheeded. Its contribution as to the nature of God is therefore in danger of being lost because of the fact that it lives away from the highways of mankind, and like a monk, attempts to escape the problems of the world, to forget and to be forgotten.

The trend of this conception is of course a violent reaction against the humanistic attitude which prevails in our twentieth century. The Barthians swing so dogmatically to the left of the center of the argument that we find them in a haze of a degrading type of mystical surrender from

the burning problems of mankind. Just as the Humanist with his religion of rationalization misses the very heart of God's character and nature through deduction, so we find this theological interpretation losing itself in the misty haze and fog of a distant mystical concept of God which is as far from human reason and life as the "religion of humanity" is from human experience and life. There is as great a danger, therefore, in losing the immanent nature of God as there is in not understanding His power to expand into a realm beyond that of the human.

The Nature of God's Relation to Man

Whether we be Humanists, Barthians, or Personalists it seems absolutely necessary that we be interested in humanity, individually and collectively. The problems which face us today are largely human problems. We, then, as humans must attempt to solve them as such, and any idea of God which we may hold must have some contact with men. It must be of use to man in his readjustment toward a higher moral and religious civilization. In this respect, then, the Humanists have an element of truth in their idea that our interpretation of God must be of some pragmatic value in relation to the problems of each and all of us who compose humanity.

If this then is necessary, we find that the theology of Absolute Transcendence is strikingly interesting to us in its interpretation of the relationship of God to man. From the rationalistic viewpoint, this idea of the relationship of God to man is totally negative. Barthianism is just as impersonal in its transcendence as it accuses Humanism of being in its interpretation of God as integration. A misunderstanding of the personal element in immanence draws this school from the interpretation of God as having any personal relation to man. The gulf between the Absolute and man can be lessened only by a conception which makes God personally interested in the human race.

Personality means more than faith, in its usual sense; it involves a faith which is a result of man's surrender to the inevitable, "the dominant will of God", as Brunner calls it. Personality also includes human endeavor, struggle, strife and adjustment. These elements of human personality can be understood only through an idea of God as one who is near enough to mankind to understand its endeavors, struggles, etc. Such a God, then, has enough of human personality (and more) to understand the individual and society. This can be realized only through God's immanent character.

It is also true that no attitude of blind surrender to a faith which excludes with one dogmatic assertion, man's personality, as well as God's , can answer the intimate relationship which man by his very nature expects of God and which God also, in all probability, wishes to have with man. To substitute such a doctrine of faith, either gained through the Bible (following Luther), or through the mystical word behind the Bible and divine inspiration (as interpreted by this theology), is to deprive man of his heritage as a child of God, as well as to snatch from God his right (as the creator of man and the energizing force behind all aspects of the universe) to a personal Fatherly interest in man. These aspects of both God and man demand that we include somewhere in our theology an attribute of immanence.

God's relationship to man must, then, be immanent and personal in nature. If this is not true, it seems difficult to understand any concept of the mystical which the Barthians uphold. If God has a relation to man which is mystical, that relationship is degraded to a crude mystery, if we do not grant a place for immanence and the personal aspects of His being, revealed in men and society. It also seems difficult for us to believe in a God who would reveal himself to one person and to him alone, coming into intimate relation

with Him, and excluding all the rest of mankind. If in some mystical way, God was immanent in Jesus the Christ, and the mystical "Word" was in him, truly was his very being; in so far as we are God's creation, even his chosen or elected few, does it not seem possible that the Word, the immanent spirit of God which was in Christ Jesus might not also dwell in the other human, spiritual creatures of God?

If this is not true, and if the Word or the immanent aspect of God is not revealed to us , as it was in Jesus, then the difference between the Christ and us lies in the realm of kind and not in the realm of degree. To assert that God is immanent and a part of the very divine being of Jesus, to assert that as the potential followers of Jesus, we, who are of the same physical creation (at least) as He, are made of an entirely different character (of a debasing, degrading, damning sinfulness, ever sinful and unable to escape from our condition) would appear to be mere folly. If we have no immanent or close relationship to God we are entirely different from Christ in kind and not merely in degree. If this is true, Christ's life and example is useless for us because we are not of the same kind.

Such seems entirely foreign to Jesus who said, "Even

greater things than these shall ye do." He also taught us that we were made in the very image of God, and that we should say when we pray "our Father." These are merely idle words unless we are in some way related to God and to Jesus in some sense of degree and not merely kind. We must be in degree a part of the "Word", the Christ, God, if we are to understand and depend upon his personal interest in our own spiritual and moral selves. God, Christ, the "Word", each is greater than we. If we take from man all hope of his being nearer the Christ, the "Word", and God, and his chance of ever growing like unto them, we pull from under man the very foundation of his hope in Christian readjustment. God must be greater than we are, but he also must be in some immediate relationship to us. He must be immanent in man for man to ever understand his benevolent love. We are not foreign to God, neither are we strangers to him. The relationship is one of nearness, like that of a father and his son.

It is almost inconceivable to believe that anyone should so misunderstand the social message of the New Testament and the prevailing teaching of the nearness of God to his children, as to make such a statement of the following nature.

"Christian faith has nothing in common with the religion of immanence. It may claim Jesus for itself, but in reality,

it is only another form of the religion of the Stoics who were much more successful than the New Testament in coining the slogans which are said to be characteristic of the Gospel; that is the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."(1)

Such an assertion can only be made from the hazy realm of extreme mysticism, which can view Jesus' life and the message of the New Testament only from the point of view of "Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, God become man." It forgets entirely the other aspects of Christ which point to the human interests of brotherhood and the personal fatherhood of a God who understands the human heart in its struggle toward a likeness of the divine.

Aid to Man in his Readjustment

Such orthodoxy regarding the idea of God, as Barthianism holds, has not only its implications concerning God's relation to man but also man's to God. The very idea that man is in himself all sinful and has fallen from Adam never to rise again by any endeavor of his own, certainly has had its influence upon the possibility of man's adjustment to society and to his interpretation of the nature of God. The abnormal

(1) Brunner, H. Emil: The Theology of Crises, Page 36.
(Italics mine.)

focus of interest upon the contradictory forces in the life of men in relation to the possibilities of humanity's development or moral and spiritual evolution (which has the aid, of course, of the guidance and direction of a cosmic God who is personally interested, tends to overemphasize these less desirable aspects of man's personality until a condition of total depravity exists. Just here is where I believe this theology makes one of its most blundering mistakes. "He (man) is not in a state of arrested development. He has in him contradictory principles which make a harmonious development altogether impossible. With his growth the contradiction in him also grows."(1)

The entire matter of the development of the contradictory principles brings into our argument the place of man's will in society's relationship to God. It seems that we must either believe God to have given man a freedom of will, thus making possible the conditioning of his own power in the lives of men; or else believe that there are contradictory forces in the personality of man which absolutely limit his freedom and leave God with an unconditioned power which is not limited by the individual man nor by society. From Brunner's attitude toward the freedom of the will, also from

(1) Brunner, H. Emil: The Theology of Crisis, Page 50.

the very absolute concept of the idea of God which this school holds, we would judge that the latter belief is upheld by Barthianism.

"Individualism and freedom of will are the two errors of idealistic liberalism." (1) We would grant that man's freedom is conditioned by evil and the forces of society, but man is not obligated to forever be held back by these. The fact that man has a choice in almost every situation which he meets would seem to indicate that he is not a puppet either in the hand of God or in the hands of the evil (contradictory forces) which may exist in his personality. If, then, this be true, he can select or reject either one course of action or the other. His environment may seem to (and oft times does) condition his choice, but in spite of this, God has endowed man with a will power, a conscience (may I be permitted to say, an aspect of his cosmic will and immanent nature) which may, in spite of all the conditioning forces, assist man in the selection of the more desirable action and give him a possibility of readjustment in his character.

In so far as man does not choose wisely (or rather wills not to choose wisely) just so far does the divine or immanent

(1) Brunner, H. Emil: The Theology of Crisis, Page 53.

nature of God within himself become conditioned. God in his immanence is then limited by his human association. Of course, if God is not within reach of man in any aspect of "nearness", and if it is difficult to see any possibility of a human will permeated by the presence of a degree of divinity, then it is true that man within his own self cannot advance in the realm of righteousness. In such a condition he has all the forces of the contrary influence of evil or contradictory aspects together with his environment without any aid of conscience, righteous will power, and a certain closeness of the attributes of God in man.

It is true, however, that all persons have such a conscience, even though it be more developed in some individuals than in others. The fallacy of a doctrine of depravity lies in the fact that it does not take cognizance of this "Presence". Of course, if we accept this doctrine, God is not conditioned by man's actions, he is not interested and has no concern in such action for he is absolutely super-human and supra-cosmic. In other words, a limited God in this sense (being limited by man's inability of proper adjustment of self will, because of an undeveloped sense of immanent divinity) cannot be the Absolute, All Perfect Sovereign. All conditioning and limitation falls upon the shoulders of man.

This is quite true, as is stated by Barthianism, but I see no reason why the individual's as well as humanity's relationship to God should be of such a depressingly, degraded nature. Just because there is error in the realm of mankind it does not follow that man is forever "fallen" and forever unable to recover truth. It seems ridiculous that man and society should be forced to wait the special election or grace of a distant God as individuals before society (or even the individual) could gain spiritual insight. The idea of immanence, with human possibilities in the region of potential aspirations toward divinity, with its influence upon conscience and the will; alters very radically the relation of mankind to God and lessens the tendency of the degradation of human personality to the level of depravity.

II.

Humanism

The Humanists in Theology

The humanistic school in religion may be easily classed as a definite reaction against the older more popular orthodox conceptions of theology and religion. Losing faith and therefore interest in the mystical supernaturalism of a transcendent Absolute, it has tended to swing to the other extreme and accept only immanence in its most intimate humanistic aspects. This has been due, in my opinion, to three factors. First, that of the extreme adherence to a transcendence that stressed the supernatural to the elimination of the possibilities of the individual man or of humanity to achieve any degree of religious idealism or righteous worth; second, to the absolute incapability of such a doctrine to pragmatically aid mankind in the elimination of the social and individualistic evils that have infested humanity throughout its history (especially its inability to eliminate social, industrial, and political evils in modern society); third, to the lack of ability on the part of this supernaturalistic theology to harmonize with the discoveries or methods of modern scientific research, particularly in the field of natural science and psychology.

Possibility of a Permanent Entity

As this thesis is interested in the ideas or concepts of God with their implications, we must at once come to the basic concerns of our central theme. If there is Reality, an Ultimate, an Absolute, a God, or an Integrating Process, or a Concretion, is it reasonable to believe that there is any degree of permanency in this entity, or God? As has been implied, the Humanists would disregard a concept of God which would uphold any marked degree of transcendence. A God with such a nature could not be empirically apprehended in the realm of men as humans. If, then, deity must be interpreted as One and Only, above all, the Absolute, this school of interpretation will find it difficult to believe in him. To remove God from accessibility to mankind, and the possibility of advancing from man or humanity to divinity, that is, to place deity in such a mystical realm that he cannot be of any pragmatic use to man in his need is not only, to the humanist, past the point of possibility, but it is unnecessary.

The impracticability of any mystical interpretation of deity and the refusal of any type of transcendence, together with the rejection of the Ultimate or Absolute is not based merely upon sentiment by this school, but upon its interpreta-

tion of the modern scientific method. The natural scientific method, together with the theory of evolution, seems to be the basis upon which the humanists would place their entire interpretation. With the popularity of this scientific method and the rise of the "life-science" emphases, (a renewed interest in bio-chemistry, biology, and psychology) this school which would bring deity into closer relationship with humanity (verily in the very composition of humanity) attempts to apply these well known principles in its interpretation of religions, metaphysics and theology. Such an interpretation applied to theology would necessarily make any concept of God "homo" centered.

Any attempt, however, to carry the methods of natural science into the spiritual or religious realm seems very much like walking on thin ice. The exclusion of any possibility for the validity of the mystical or emotional element in religion (or even in a system of ethics) would tend to give them a sense of impractability and impossibility. The religion, even of us humans, cannot thrive upon the principles of cold naturalism. The very mental constitution of an individual demands something upon which it may place its loyalty; some End, some Reality apart from itself upon which to depend. The human mind may rule out all that is "unscient-

ific", but the human heart and soul will perish upon such a cold, deductive diet.

The humanistic attempt to base religion on the methods of naturalistic philosophy seems to be substantiated in the following quotation.

"The clear perception of what is of greatest value in our entire environment, and hence is God, can only come when we form those habits which will enable us to perceive it. The pure in heart, who shall see God, are they who shall have habits." (1) With the interpretation of God as our "entire environment" and the reactions of our habits to that environment, it is impossible to conceive of God as being any permanent absolute entity. Environment itself must and does change, therefore deity must be thought of in like terms. Again, if religion is to be interpreted merely as an obedience to and a response towards principles alike in kind to those of biology and psychology; it is easy then to think of God "as an object to be perceived through sense experience." (2)

The Nature of God

From the preceding argument we have found that any

(1) Wieman, Henry N. : Wrestle of Religion with Truth, Page 92.
 (2) Ibid: Page 94.

possibility of the nature and existence of God as being in any degree a fixed entity or finality is rejected by this newer school in theology. The nature of God must then be found in the realm of flux and the changing order of humanity. Ames speaks of the nature of deity as "the substance of the actual world of things and people, of history and projected action. Philosophy calls it the Universal or the Absolute; science designates it as Nature or Life; religion names it God." (1) As the world of natural objects, the world of people, history and projected action is ever in a state of change, such an Absolute of philosophy, Nature of science, of God of religion must ever be characterized in terms of change. Any conception of stability either in the realm of man or God cannot be looked for. Such a conception of projected action is explained by Wieman as being "that integrating process which works through all the world not only to bring human lives into organic fellowship with one another but also to maintain and develop organic interdependence and mutual support between all parts and aspects of the cosmos. This integrating process is God." (2)

In spite of the seeming loyalty to a doctrine of change

(1) Ames, Edward S. : Religion , Page 145.

(2) Wieman, Henry N. ; Methods of Private Religious Living, Page

in all things to the overthrowal of any conceived notion of the Absolute or stable entity (either in man or deity) it would at first hand appear that these gentlemen were grasping for a something which they have already lost in their juggling of a metaphysic to conform merely to the human realm. They seem not able to travel far in their attempt at painting a picture of God by the deductive method of science before they find themselves in a snare. They seem to be lost early without any notion of stability, hence we find invention of such pleasingly cool terms as "projected action", "the integrating process", and "the sum totality of the most desirable of collective human personality."

If our friends are to have any comprehensive idea of projected action or integration there must be an ideal (or an idea) pattern upon which to base any attempt at integration. Without this it would seem that integration is mere motion without any sense of stability. In turn, integration would easily become disintegration in so far as the accomplishment of action or any arrival at the goal of the most desirable traits of collective and accumulative personality is concerned. Unaccustomed as they are to accept any ideal goal of stability even for the pragmatic purpose of use in

reaching a higher stage of idealistic advancement (which in itself is often termed "idealized reality") they turn to the immediate, the individualistic, the present, as a substitute for finality. "Things as they are are final. Any quality as such is final; it is at once initial and terminal ; just what it is as it exists." (1)

This then seems to be an attempt to place some conception of finality into their scheme of argumentation. As far as the human is concerned, permanence of reality is to rest in the present individual qualities of a single man. However, as common sense would tell us, qualities of human beings or of collective human personalities cannot in their very nature of advancement and achievement be final themselves. The humanists appear to be lost in a vicious circle of non-finality, for, the very bases of their authority (or Reality) rests with the human being and humanity which in itself is relative and unstable in its progression towards desirability. Thus if humanity is Reality and the best of humanity, God, then as humanity and especially the best or most desirable in humanity is relative, we find God to be relative to the various stages in progression of society or civilization.

(1) Ratner, Joseph : Philosophy of John Dewey, Page 26.

Having no regulative power, we easily find ourselves lost in a swirl of individualistic impressions and a tentative social consciousness (or desirability) as to the idealistic goal and achievement of humanity. "There is no mode of regulation that operates wholly from above to below, or from within outward, or from without inwards." (1)

The Nature of God's Relation to Man

Thus we find ourselves in a maze of relativity and uncertainty both as to the legitimacy and the possibility of any accomplishment upon the part of man towards an ideal goal of human character and the formation of "those habits" which will raise man and society to future projected action, which in turn will achieve the concretion of all human goals and ideals, or God. This advancement of man towards the ideal seems to be the very contention of humanism. Thus they defeat their own purpose in so far as technical theology is concerned.

Furthermore, such an extremely illusive interpretation of the nature of God, takes from mankind (even if we are to regard God in the pragmatic sense) all hope of any assurance

(1) Ratner, Joseph : Philosophy of John Dewey, Page 26.

of a force from without to aid man in the complexity of his own nature and the difficulty in harmonizing his own individuality with humanity as a whole. Man cannot possibly advance merely by tugging at his own boot straps; it takes something more to achieve character, virtue, and righteousness.

God, then, defined as the sum total of the most desirable idealistic qualities in the individual and in society, does not challenge either man nor humanity to a continuous state of accomplishment. Such a conception, taken alone, may aid man in his climb from indecency to respectability, it may aid society in its climb from barbarism; but as for pushing society on from civilization to idealization such a conception fails. Besides a tugging at self element, there must be a challenging, vitalizing force in human society. I contend that this cannot come from society in itself, but from a deity who is at least sure as to its own power, finality, and identity. Such a concept of God is the only adequate aid to mankind. Such a concept only can bring about the orderliness of concretion of which Whitehead speaks and which, in my opinion, Wieman entirely misunderstands. This concretion is concerned, not merely with the rational order, but it also gives access to a type of mysticism which is one of the necessary elements of its nature.

"The character of all being which makes it a cosmos, rather than a chaos, is the principle of concretion, which gathers up all being and packs it.... into every grain of sand or flower, or animal, or man. It is that constitutive principle which rallies the whole universe to the making and sustaining of every concrete thing." (1) "God is that non-temporal actuality which has to be taken account of in every creative phase." (2) "The various elements which are brought into unity are the other creatures (or aspects of individual qualities) and the ideal forms, and God." (3) Such brief quotations as these point very emphatically (to me at least) to the fact that Wieman does not understand Whitehead's theory of concretion in its entirety, or else he overlooks the entire implications of the theory. Any character of deity which tends to establish a cosmos and find expression for itself in flower, animal, and man must include in its very being some mystical element which only those who warrant the legitimacy of the mystical can understand.

If the "various elements" (in humanity) which bring complexity to unity or concretion include the individual "most desirable traits" (or the highest states of physical, mental, and moral achievement) the most ideally possible

(1) Whitehead, Religion in the Making, Page 90. (2) 94. (3) 93.

state of excellence in humanity, and lastly, God; then we must necessarily include a realm outside individual man and humanity as such. This I contend, Whitehead includes but Wieman omits; because, no doubt, of his strict adherence to the excellence of humanity as such. This realm is that of mysticism or that area of truth and validity which cannot be understood through the processes of rationalization. It is merely "known" and "understood" by those who allow a place in the human constitution for something other than rationalization and sense experience. A place, I believe, is made for this in the theory of concretion when Whitehead contends and asks for a unity of individual characteristics and the ideal forms or goals, and God.

The nature of the relationship of God to man is, therefore, in so far as man is concerned, limited in humanism, because a mystical element, which would allow God even in a small way to reveal any aspect of transcendence is excluded. Even immediate immanence, the "summum bonum" of humanistic theology, has a certain mysticism which certain members of this school would ascribe to the non-sensical realm of crude mystery. Mere mystery, confusion, and uncertainty are far from the enlightening guidance of a mystical experience. God's relation to man, then, is so rationally reduced to

habit and habit formation and the integration of these habits to produce an idea or ideal habit, only in turn to be offset and overthrown by other habits - that the very challenge of an aiding, guiding, directing force is impossible. A loving Father, a personally interested God, even in the realm of spiritual interests, is forbidden by the very flux of change and uncertainty. (1)

Aid to Man in his Readjustment

Although we must realize the challenge humanism gives to civilization, in its assumption that man must depend upon his own ability to guide and direct his destiny, we must not be misled by the implications which can easily be followed to an extreme position as to the power of humanity in itself. It is true that mankind can find its way to salvation, but only

(1) Buckham, John Wright : The Humanity of God, (page 31) makes a quotation from Whitehead as to the nature of religion which seems to substantiate the above interest in the mystical element in religion, the idea of God or concretion. "Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things, something which gives meaning to all that passes and yet eludes apprehension, etc." It is just this element which I contend Wieman and other of the humanists do not comprehend in Whitehead's definition of concretion. (Italics mine.)

within certain limits. A more ideal state of society is realized by the use of man's mind in invention and the use of his hands in the crafts. The advance towards the extinction of disease, the aid of mechanism in making possible leisure time, comfort and luxury, all point to the aid which an appreciation of man's physical and mental possibilities and society's determined endeavor to better itself has given us. This, however, is not all of the picture.

There is a side to man other than his mental and physical possibilities. Society or humanity has staggering problems which cannot be answered or solved by these endowments alone. Any one would grant that the individual has in his very constitution certain moral aspects (a conscience) which cannot be interpreted by the intellect as such nor by the popular mechanical skill of psychoanalysis. Man still has a sense of spiritual values. By the very fact that he has a choice of right and wrong and a will that is free - be it God-given or man-achieved - certain problems arise which he cannot solve by himself. Evils still exist which make it necessary for the individual to turn to an ideal outside of himself and society for aid. Sorrow, disappointment, spiritual loneliness, and sympathy are actualities which cannot be met by the individual nor even by humanity itself. Both must

look towards another Reality for aid. If that Reality, or God, is so much a part of society and of the individual as to be merely the best which humanity and the individual immediately possess, even when in perplexity or in a realization of a needed readjustment, then it seems that men individually and collectively must turn to a "nothingness" or void for the solution of the most staggering problems of life. Such a skepticism as to the possibility of any entity which exists outside of ourselves and society would lead men to despair in times of their greatest crises. Such an immanence of God, which the humanists hold, seems to defeat its own purpose. If, as they contend, it is necessary to keep well within the bounds of the empirical and pragmatic method in the theological realm, then, their attitude towards the nature of God and his relationship to man (as well as that of the readjustment of society from those great periods of crisis which appear in the life of each) seems to be inconsistent.

Humanism seems to defeat its own purpose. If God is to be used pragmatically and experienced empirically this must hold true of every aspect of human experience. In the great periods of struggle in life, when men look beyond themselves, and society grasps in its dilemma for new insight; at such times, a God over as well as in his world, a God of love,

understanding, and sympathy is pragmatically necessary for the salvation of society and the individuals who comprise it. At this very point humanism breaks down and its appeal is of little avail because of the complete handicap which its own contentions place in the way of man. It does not meet the situation because of its nearsightedness as to the realm of the mystical and the validity of entities outside of human powers of reason and experience.

III.

Personalism

Personalism

With the introduction of Personalism we find ourselves about to study a school which has won for itself prominence. This is true not only because of its peculiar interest in personality and its sane approach to idealism. It has gained philosophic attention also because it has solved, to many, more satisfactorily than any other school, the problem of the nature of God with its various implications.

Personalism seeks for its allies in the field of philosophy those systems which adhere to Idealism. Any analysis of the idea of God and of personality then must be made from the approach of Idealism. It is true that many of those who are included among the followers of Personalism run the gauntlet of idealistic differences in interpretation. Most of them, however, keep well within the bounds of philosophic idealism. Differences within the personalistic family group themselves around atheistic, pantheistic, absolutistic, relativistic, and theistic personalism. (1) In spite of the attractiveness of absolutistic and relativistic personalism we find the school of theistic personalism to be more worthy of our concentrated attention. This is true not only for the reason

(1) This classification is given by Knudson in his Philosophy of Personalism.

that it is the most prevalent type in America but because it represents views which seem to the author of this paper nearer the truth.

My selection of theistic personalism has been made because it most fairly represents the idea of transcendent-immanence. This interpretation in its theological contribution endeavors to harmonize not merely the two contending schools which we have already discussed, but, it offers a unique contribution of its own. Personalism is not a middle ground between extreme transcendence and extreme immanence. It adheres to transcendent-immanence for the reason that it firmly believes such an approach is the only solution we have of the problem of the idea of God. Many Personalists also hold to the belief that if the problem of crisis is to be solved at all it will be through the proper evaluation of the validity of personality. If the personalistic school were as aggressive in its method and approach as either of the other two schools presented, it seems to me that we would be much closer to the possibility of solving the problem of crisis.

The Probability of a Permanent Entity

Theistic Personalism, or Personal Idealism, contends that personality must be considered as the key to Reality. If, then, we are to find any definition of Reality, it must be through our interpretation of personality. Such an interpretation as this at once excludes any mechanistic concept of Reality, for personality can only be thought of in terms of idealism. It is interested primarily in mental and spiritual concerns. Any naturalistic conception of the universe and God, therefore, must be excluded when thinking of Personalism.

It is comparatively easy to think of a possible closeness of certain types of Personalism to Humanism. As personality (when thought of in "common sense" interpretation) may be confined to mere individuals and the human characteristics of all individuals, it is easy to see some common ground for a likeness between the two schools mentioned. If personality is a merely human characteristic, and personality is only a relationship between two or more individuals, then, such a Personalism has much in common with Humanism. Group personality, in accordance with Humanism, would be subject to continual change. The possibility of any permanent entity would be an impossible supposition.

What I have defined as the "common sense" or "man-of-

the-street" concept of personality finds itself lost in relativity. Any such definition of the term must be considered as inadequate when it comes to the solving of the problem which we have in hand. To say that reality is only a "perceptual process" (*phénomène représentatif*) (1) related merely to consciousness; to imply that personality is only perception, subject to the laws of relativity and contradiction, is to give an unsatisfactory definition of the term. Relativistic Personalism does not go beyond the "common sense" definition.

I have introduced this conception of personality because it seems to me that it is the only way in which many younger students of Personalism can justify their desire to include in their philosophic ideas certain concepts of the "Chicago" school of Humanists. The endeavor to bring to life a "Personalistic-Humanistic" trend of thought must fall before any adequate definition of personality. No one has a right, if he is to meet the entire implications of personality, to stop short of including Purpose in his definition of personality.

Theistic Personalism holds that it is possible to con-

(1) The ideas referred to are in my opinion like those held by Renouvier.

tend for a permanent entity, or something outside of the perceptive process and the interchange of individual characteristics. It upholds the reasonableness of the possibility of an idealistic pattern according to which individual personalities may be formed. By this Pattern, personality can be truly realized. Bowne gives an explanation which shows the possibility of coordinating human personality with the notion of a permanent personality. "By personality we mean only self-knowledge and self-control. Where these are present we find personal being; where they are absent the being is impersonal. Selfhood, self-knowledge, and self-direction are the essence of personality; and these have no implication of correlative or dependent limitation." (1) Here we find that as individuals, if we are to realize selfhood, a stability of self-knowledge (at least) must be required. Relativism, contradiction, and change in human nature do not contribute to self-knowledge nor self-control. Selfhood and self direction cannot be found in this way. We are, therefore, forced to accept a notion of stability which will include an ideal self-direction and an ideal Self, and an Ideal Personality.

"True development of personality consists in the attainment of the highest capacities for aesthetic, intellectual,

(1)

Bowne, Bordon P. : Theism, Page 162.

and moral goodness." (1) Such a goal of personality demands an ideal or a Supreme Pattern by which we as humans will be able to achieve the "highest capacities" which lead to Selfhood.

Experience has taught us that we can only gain our best (Self) by considering perception and sense experience subject to intelligence and a will to guide and direct them. Intelligence and a will to direct must, if success is to be obtained, subject itself to a guiding pattern or Supreme Personality. The Personalist would contend that for the sake of advancement and the final domination of intelligence over mere sense experience; the conscious knowledge of Self must prevail. Upon this lies the only hope, "the only test of both the reality and the possibility of self-direction and self realization." (2).

The possibility as well as the necessity of a permanent entity which in some degree has finality is self-evident in the philosophy of Personalism. The type of interpretation of the aspect of deity must make a place for the realization of Selfhood; the intelligent freedom of the individual from

(1) Turner, J. E. : Nature of Deity, Page 237.

(2) Bowne, Borden P. : Theism, Page 153.

those things which limit the greatest achievement of self towards the highest capacities of personality.

The Nature of God

We have indicated what seems to be a logical conclusion regarding the aim and contribution of Personalism, namely, the seeking of personal being. This may be understood better as the freedom of the individual to secure self-knowledge and self-direction through conscious self will. If such a freedom is possible, we must seek the means by which this is so. We must turn to the basic principle which makes advancement within our reach. This principle to the Personalist is an Infinite Pattern or Supreme Personality.

Although not accepting Absolutism it seems necessary, from the personalistic viewpoint, for us to adhere to some kind or degree of finality. If personality (human personality at its highest capacity) is to be the key to Reality, then, Reality must be fashioned after a pattern or an Ideal Personality. In so far as we are concerned, this Ideal Personality must be supreme and final. The question of limitation at once presents itself. The discussion of the possibility of this will appear later.

Our interest at this time is primarily in the nature of God. The fact that behind the biological construction of man there is the Self, implies, to Professor Joseph Le Conte, the possibility of a Self or Person behind the Universe. "There is only one place in the whole universe where we can get behind the physical phenomena - behind the veil of matter; that is, in our brain, and we find there a self, a Person. Is it not reasonable to think that if we could get behind the veil of Nature we should find the same, that is, a Person? But if so, we must conclude an Infinite Person, and therefore the only Complete Personality that exists. Perfect Personality is not only self-conscious, but self-existent. Our personalities are self-conscious, indeed, but not self-existent. They are only images, as it were, separated fragments of the Infinite Personality-God." (1) Such a concept as this is not, however, so Infinite and Supreme as to eliminate, upon the part of God, any concern for the lesser personalities and the striving that goes on within a human soul.

God comes into contact with man through the possibility of man and nature realizing their own peculiar expressions.

(1) Royce, Josiah : The Conception of God, Page 77.

If freedom and self-expression are within the limits of the nature of man, then God can assume the nature of transcendent-immanence or (in more human terms) the nature of Fatherhood. "The most reasonable solution of the problem of Nature seems to regard the natural world as the progressive creation of a purposive, benevolent Intelligence who has infilled it with an exhaustible developing potency, intelligence and germinal freedom which enables all the various life forms to work out, each for its unique expression, yet who holds all within the bounds of an all-comprehending unity and a progressive purpose." (1)

Within the notion of Fatherhood we find the "God-concept which is central in the ideas of moral character, ethical goodness, practical value, immanent presence, and willingness to communicate with and help men." (2) God, then, is not a despot as extreme transcendence would have us believe; neither is he meaningless change as the popular type of immanence would imply. God is rather the creative source of finite personal being because of the fact that he is the ground, the transcendent ground, of all Being. (3).

(1) Buckham, John Wright : The Humanity of God, Page 138.

(2) Schilpp, Paul : Do We Need a New Religion?, Page 152.

(3) Leighton, Joseph A. : Religion and the Mind of Today, Page

The Nature of God's Relation to Man

If God is the Supreme Personality is it possible that he may be limited? Such a question could not logically be made had man been constituted differently than he is. As we realize that man through his human personality has the unique as well as the greatest power in nature within his grasp, that of the freedom of will; we can begin to understand just how other personalities and the Supreme Personality can be limited. In spite of heredity and environment man can make choices that affect all personalities. Within the philosophic interpretation of the ideas of freedom of the will, good and evil, and like problems, we find the crux of Personalism.

If Personalism had the ability to more satisfactorily solve the problem of individual choice and the effect of that choice, in other words, if Personalism could solve more satisfactorily the problem of freedom and its implications as to the nature of man and God, many would more readily see the possibility of personality as the key to reality. If the nature of God were not limited to the personality of man, with his power to choose evil as well as good, many, no doubt,

would accept the concept of God as being the Supreme Person. The inability upon the part of many Personalists to even touch the satisfactory explanation of this most aggravating problem has tended to contribute to the choice (upon the part of some) of humanitarianism. Others have put their trust in complete transcendence equal to that of the "theology of crisis."

To my mind no satisfactory answer can be given to these questions except that of faith. By such an explanation one can easily be misunderstood. Using faith in the endeavor to explain the problems of freedom, good and evil, and the limitation of God may seem a very inadequate gesture as to the final solution of these problems; however, it seems to be the best that we have.

Faith does not mean a helpless attitude of waiting for the solution of our problems in "heaven"; in an existence beyond our own. The demands of modern society compel us to attempt, with all our intellectual and moral capacities, to solve these questions here and now. If this be true, we must first have faith in the characteristics which man has which will contribute to his intelligent view of the right and his choice of it over the wrong. Intelligence and right knowledge alone are not sufficient to so challenge the will as to insure

right action which will, in turn, overcome evil with good. Man cannot with his intellect alone solve the question of right and wrong; he cannot by this means alone select the most desirable characteristics of his moral capacities, and then with deliberation carry them to a logical completion in action. The very fact that another element is included defeats any such attempt. As has been implied above, the failure of Humanism to answer these problems centers in the fact that it attempts to exclude this other element.

We can go part way with the Humanist and contend that intelligence is required, but, when he demands that a mystical faith and trust in a power outside of man and society is impractical; our ways must part. We must have faith in the human possibilities of personality, in the capacity which man has to intelligently see the difference between good and evil. By intelligence alone he does not have within his power the element which will contribute to his "willing" and realizing right action. This other necessary element is a faith in a force outside of himself which will give him a challenge, through a limited ability, at least, to see a reason for ideals and goals which may be achieved through right action. This faith in ideals and goals is essential if the will is to conquer and become successful in the

realization of choices which will contribute to a higher "selfhood" - a more desirable personality.

A faith in the final victory of good over evil requires a belief in the desirability of seeking worth-while ideals. Desirable goals can be appreciated and realized only through a faith in a kind of God who reveals to us these desirable ideals and goals. To the personalist who attempts to even approach the solution of these problems, the most desirable ideals and goals come not out of the accumulation of the best of human capacities, but, rather from the lovingkindness of God, the Father. These very ideals and goals which we conceive as desirable are to be considered as coming from him; they are manifestations of the qualities of his own Supreme Personality. Of course, this implies an ascent to mysticism. The Purposive Motive behind our appreciation for and attempt to realize (in our actions) the most desirable ideals and goals lies in the Personality of God.

An insight into this Personality cannot come from reason nor emotional excesses which tend to belittle any endeavor on our part to reach these ideals and goals. The experience that I have referred to comes from the knowledge of the possibility of communion with the Father through the appreciation

of the revelation in his own Personality of those ideals and goals which make for our achievement of "Self" or higher personality. The Humanist, with his rejection of the validity of any such experience, finds himself at a loss when he attempts to explain those human ideals which make for the realization of the best of human character-capacities.

We find such attributes of the Personality of God as we have mentioned to be not only necessary but altogether desirable for our own personal development. If our will is so challenged by these aspects of the nature of the Father that we truly desire to act upon them for our own development of the "self", or the enrichment of our personality, then is it not true that there might be other personal manifestations of the Personality of God that we would also desire for ourselves? Thus it seems that the attempt to solve the problems of freedom of the will, good and evil, and the limitation of God must come through the consciousness upon our part of the possibilities which we find within the field of personality. Within that realm we should uphold the validity of human intellectual endeavor, the justification of the worth and value of character ideals and goals, as well as the necessity of appreciating the manifestation of the

personality of God in those goals and ideals. To be able to choose good for good's sake and not be able to sense the goal to which such choices lead is to blind oneself to the very purpose of our gift of the freedom of the will.

To me, the freedom of the will is a gift of the Father-God to use rightly in the further betterment of our "self" or personality. It is not a temptation to be feared because of the dangers which might come as the result of undesirable decisions or choices. It demands, however, a steady trust in the possibilities of mankind and in the ability and love of the Father which will show us goals of possible achievement that will challenge and make easier the comparatively small daily choices which we have to make. This can be done only through communion with Him - which is indeed mystical. The difficulties of these above mentioned problems have more possibility of being solved (to me at least) by such a trust and faith.

God is primarily interested in our spiritual and moral welfare; every other concern seems to be secondary. We must, then, commune with Him if we are to solve for ourselves, even in a limited way, these problems. Physical suffering, sorrow, adversity are difficult to understand, but their perplexing nature can be lessened through our hope in the

ability of mankind to make and learn how to make the proper necessary adjustments. Aside from this it is necessary, and should be self-evident, that we must have such a faith in God as to allow him to show us the Supreme Good which can lead us into such an understanding of his Personality that we may see "in him all things are well". This is the final goal and purpose of our existence.

If, then, we find God to be limited, it is because of the inability upon the part of man and mankind to make the choices which will indeed assure freedom. Man and God are limited by wrong choices upon the part of man. Such limitation is possible because man wills to do evil when he fails to feel the challenge of the worthiness of character ideals and goals, which are manifestations of the nature of the Supreme Personality, or God. In other words, both God and man are limited when man fails for one reason or another to see God in and above his world; transcendent and immanent.

God is limited when man chooses unwisely because of the fact that he cannot reveal further aspects of his Personality to man. Man in turn is limited because of lack of vision to appreciate the further unfolding of his own personality as well as the higher goals and ideals which are the manifestations of the Supreme Personality.

Aid to Man in his Readjustment

From the above we find that God can be of aid to man in his process of readjustment. God is not so far away as to be compelled to force his way into the consciousness of man. Neither is God conceived as being so near to man that he loses his own identity in the "better personal capacities" of the individual man and humanity. God, as the Father, waits upon man. It is my contention that if man endeavored to commune with the highest and noblest in his own personality and with the goals of those ideals he would be able to more effectively make the proper moral and spiritual adjustment which, in turn, would avoid the coming of religious and moral crisis. It appears to me that this is true because such goals are the revelation of the Personality of God. As God's total Personality is that of true Fatherhood, man may be aided by further revelation of the nature of God. Such communion is implied by Bowne. "The absolute knowledge and self-possession which is necessary to perfect personality can be found only in the absolute and infinite Being upon which all things depend." (1) If we are, therefore, to find any degree of higher personality, it must be by the aid of communion with those attributes of

(1) Bowne, Borden P. : Theism, Page 168.

Perfect Personality which are self-evident aids to man in his adjustment.

The Supreme Person, or the Father, did not limit himself and man when He gave man a "will that is free". Rather he gave man an instrument through which he could appreciate by vision (experience) and right choices what may be considered to be manifestations of the Personality of God. Man is both, then, the sinner and the revealer. By effort and struggle man fits himself to be worthy and to appreciate the unveiling of the characteristics of the Personality of God. If man does not do this he sins. God loves his children as a Father and shows himself to them; greater manifestations of his love will be shown to them if they respond to his love. If man rejects such love it is man's fault. God forces himself on no one, but continues to love man just the same, whatever his alienation. Limitation is wholly in the realm of the unappreciating nature of man. The story of the prodigal son interprets this love upon the part of the Father, and the limitation which the freedom of the son puts upon the Father God.

The nature of God's relation to man can be found in a totality of the attributes of the Supreme Personality such as we have in true Fatherhood. Patiently, lovingly, the

Father God waits upon the insight which man may willingly have of him. If man responds, his character seeks a more ideal state of personality-achievement and thus the Supreme Pattern may be more completely revealed.

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